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ABSTRACT

This paper contends that women are underrepresented in leadership positions and that women have been socialized not to take risks, not to be assertive, and not to be overtly influential in their personal world. A training program is described which attempts to counteract this socialization for undergraduate women. The six components of the program are presented: (1) the self-esteem phase which includes exercises designed to stimulate students' thinking about leadership; (2) the leadership styles phase which includes self-assessment on leadership skills; (3) the problem solving phase which encourages students to articulate a goal and the means to attain it; (4) the group management phase which develops a model of an effectively functioning group; (5) the conflict management phase which discusses positive conflict resolution; and (6) the public presentation of self segment wich teaches participants to write a speech and to understand an audience. Participants are described as being excited by the knowledge that leadership skills are diverse and can be learned. It is noted that the class has been offered separately to traditional undergraduate women and to reentry women students. (ABL)

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LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

"Leadership Training for Women" describes a training program that has been designed for undergraduate women. The content includes examination of leadership theories, analysis of one's leadership styles in different situations and assessment of one's current skill level. In addition, participants learn how to promote effective group functioning through a study of group dynamics. Problem-solving techniques, conflict negotiation skills, public presentation of self and communication skills are part of the program also. Various delivery formats are described for different populations such as traditional age undergraduate women and returning women. A description is provided of a three credit undergraduate interdepartmental course on leadership which incorporates the content of the training program. Additional modules such as self-esteem and self image building, career and educational choices and assertive behavior are suggested for use with groups evidencing the need for this kind of work. A description of supportive data is presented derived from the evaluations of program participants.

Leadership Training for Women

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the leadership training program that has been developed for undergraduate women. Women constitute a minority in leadership positions in our society. A partial but substantial explanation for this phenomenon lies in our socialization of females -- lessons which instruct girls not to take risks, not to be assertive and analytic, or directly and overtly influential in their personal world and in the world of work. Clearly, this results in a profound lack of fit for women between their appropriately socialized selves and the demands of both today's and tomorrow's world. Changes in family structure evidenced by the large number of single heads of households and shared house management and childcare arrangements, the impact of technology and the increased number of women in the workplace, and the need for increased personal development along new paths catalyzed by the women's movement and stimulated by a markedly altered planetary economic picture have produced a pressing need for women to expand their repetories. Women must acquire attitudes, skills and abilities that until recently were deemed appropriate for males only. If women's behavioral and attitudinal repetories continue to conform to the limited influence styles presently available to them they will be virtually shutout of leadership roles and positions and relegated to jobs low in status and meager in economic reward. Female socialization and the forces of prejudice have extracted a costly toll. The toll for all society is an expensive one in terms of human value as well as planetary survival. This training program is offered as one means of reducing that toll.

Program Content: 1) Various training program components -- self-esteem and self-image building, public presentation of self, leadership style analysis, effective group functioning, conflict management, etc. 2) Brief discussion of supporting data, 3) Discussion of various delivery formats for a range of settings and populations.

I. Training Program Components

The training program is divided into six components. The first component is that of self-esteem and self-image building.

(a) Self-Image and Self-Esteem Building. This initial phase of the program consists of structured exercises and experiences with a variety of objectives. The first set is a series of warm-up exercises intended to assist students to begin to know each other and to feel comfortable interacting within the training group.

The second set consists of values clarification and life goals setting exercises. These are included in order to stimulate students' thinking in the direction of selecting a goal or a situation which would require their leadership. This task is part of a later phase in the training program.

We instruct students to come to our next meeting dressed as a leader. At this meeting they are asked to explain to the group why they chose their outfit and to talk about the contexts in which they would lead. They are encouraged to include such considerations as situation, nature of the group, and geographical location in their discussion.

The next step in this phase is an exercise in which trainees are asked to describe a situation in which they did their best work and a situation in which they did their worst work. The purpose of this exercise is to sensitize trainees to the range of factors present in both situations which

ultimately affect both the quality of the product and the quality of human performance.

In order to help trainees begin to assess their own resources for leadership and to begin developing confidence in making public presentations we terminate the first phase of the training program with each trainee standing before the group to talk about her good qualities and her strengths for approximately one minute.

(B) Leadership Styles. This second component of the training program examines the range of leadership styles available to a leader. Utilizing the Tannebaum-Schmidt Continuum of Leader Behavior and the Hersey-Blanchard Model of Situational Leadership participants assess their present leadership styles at home, at college, and at work. In addition they read about and discuss in small groups the factors that influence leadership style such as group climate, the nature of the goals to be accomplished, the nature of the work group such as maturity level, group size and the degree of fit between individual member's needs and the group goals.

The final exercise in this section involves a leadership skills assessment. Participants are asked to rate their level of expertise for each of the following skills: Goal Setting, Conflict Management, Group Management, and Public Presentation of Self. Self-evaluation is sought again in the three different settings of home, college, and work.

Participants also look at influence from the perspective of male-female leadership styles. They examine the advantages and disadvantages of each style and realize that neither style is entirely adequate to the challenge implicit in the need for effective leadership. Rather, the need is to balance and integrate the strengths present in each approach within

the demands of the specific context.

(C) Problem-Solving and Developing a Strategy for Change. In this component of the program participants have the opportunity to identify and clarify a goal(s) for a project they are interested in, or a change they would like to see implemented. It is at this point in the Leadership Training Program that the earlier work on values clarification and life goals can prove very useful especially to the traditional age undergraduate woman. Typically, she is just beginning to move into the larger world beyond her adolescent experiences in developing a sense of self and requires some additional support and guidance in articulating a leadership goal for herself.

Once the participants have articulated a goal that is meaningful to them, discussion centers around ways to achieve that goal. The focus is on identifying stepping stones to that goal or objectives and prioritizing them along with developing an understanding of the resources needed to accomplish the objectives. Workshop members divide into small groups to test each other's goals and objectives against reality and to offer suggestions and information. The next step is for the leader to gain commitment for her plan from group members. By this stage of the training program, participants have a sense of their own style of leadership and a working knowledge of what styles work best in certain contexts. They have articulated a goal which they would like to influence others to work toward accomplishing and they have mapped out a strategy to aid them in arriving at a specific end point or outcome. They are now ready to implement their plans.

(D) Group Management. We begin the group management segment of the program by developing a model of an effectively functioning group. This includes discussions, exercises and readings around the group dynamics of

decision-making, communication, goal setting, conflict management, power and leadership styles and functions, as well as cohesion, and norms.

Part of our focus is on the importance of leader awareness of the individual needs, desires and resources of group members so that the task of the group can be structured to fit these factors. Participants are aided in developing a number of different assessment procedures for ascertaining the needs of the group. As an exercise they use this assessment in a group in which they are a member outside of the training group. They are then able to make a determination as to whether the group is meeting the needs of the members and a tentative and partial assessment of the effectiveness of the group.

(E) Conflict Management. The material in the module on conflict management is based on the book Getting to Yes by Fisher & Ury. The approach employed is called "Principled Negotiation" and involves being able to see the distinction between people and the problem during conflict. This is a new approach to resolving differences and maintains that a constructive and durable resolution to conflict is one in which both parties win as contrasted with the win-lose approach with one party as winner and the other as loser. Positive conflict resolution is equated with effective problem-solving.

This particular topic in the training program is fraught with ambivalence for women. The formidable forces of socialization have taught women not to create disturbances, to make waves. Good girls are seen and not heard. They are to speak softly and politely and to calm the rough waters of disagreement. This is not a functional approach for any woman who aspires to a position of influence in today's and tomorrow's world. In this portion of the program,

participants learn that conflict is a valuable source of energy and if managed effectively, can provide a reservoir of creative ideas and innovative programs.

Again, for women, the challenge is to utilize their reknown supportive capabilities for people who have differing opinions without feeling a need to accept and acquiesce to those opinions. Much attention in this program segment is given to the point that understanding another opinion is not the same as agreeing with it. Participants form small groups at this juncture of the program and take turns presenting their opinions on a controversial issue. They are then instructed to reverse positions and debate this opposite viewpoint with other members of the group in a role reversal exercise. They are encouraged to attend to their feelings and to any insights they may have gained through arguing for the opposite view.

Again, deriving from Fisher & Ury's work, participants are taught the four basic steps for inventing options for problem-solving. They utilize this process in their small group with whom they discussed and debated a controversial issue, with the task that of moving toward consensus.

(F) Public Presentation of Self teaches participants how to write a speech, how to understand the needs and interests of the audience and how to manage their nervousness. We look at some basic communications ideas and skills such as utilizing various channels for sending a message, the number of key ideas to be included in a speech of particular length and factors influencing receiver retention level of information. We videotape each participant giving a short speech and use the tape for constructive feedback on verbal and non-verbal behavior and organization of ideas. Typically,

most attention is given to the use of verbal fillers and qualifiers both of which reduce the effectiveness - the influence - of the speaker.

The main focus in this segment is on practice - practice in preparing a talk and many opportunities for practice in speaking before a group. An important part of each practice session is the opportunity for participants to give and receive effective feedback on performance and to learn to separate the feedback on performance behavior from evaluation of self.

II. Supportive Data

As part of the program evaluation, participants were asked to respond to some questions and offer some comments (1) their development as a leader, (2) to indicate the most valuable segment from the program, (3) to explain what skill or piece of information they would be able to apply immediately, and (4) the evaluation also asked for the most surprising idea or piece of information, (5) comments and suggestions for changing and improving the course.

In response to question 1, participants rate their growth as 1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent, the mean for 26 responses was 3.97. When asked to explain their choice of ratings most respondents focused on the perceived value of assessing their own styles of leadership, and learning that a range of styles is useful in a variety of situations. They found valuable the idea that one can acquire new leadership skills and strengthen those that already exist. Participants were under the impression prior to the workshop, that one either had leadership ability or didn't have it, and if one didn't have it, there was nothing to be done about that. The idea that leadership can be learned by any interested individual was seen as both eye-opening and exciting by these young women. One participant stated

that she felt "empowered" by that perspective.

An interesting response from these participants was that they felt both relieved, and encouraged to hear that many of the qualities and characteristics that they felt to be a part of themselves as females have an important place in the behavioral repertoire of an effective leader. A commonly held belief among group members was that a leader was authoritarian, ran the show and was hell-bent on getting the job done. A weak leader was one who was concerned with feelings and relationships among people, cared about the quality of work life in the group, and was compassionate. Therefore, she probably would not be able to accomplish her goals. Their conception of a successful leader prior to training coincided with descriptions of the stereotypical male role - aggressive, task-oriented, logical and analytical, not sensitive to feelings of others, forceful, etc. Reading assignments and discussions centering around Alice Sargent's book, The Androgenous Manager as well as discussion of the material in Getting to Yes helped eliminate some of these old attitudes. The idea that an effective leader must be flexible in her leadership style and have a range of behavior in her repetoire was seen as contributing strongly to participants' growth as leaders.

The segment on public presentation of self was credited with contributing to leadership growth for the participants. A number of students noted that they absolutely hated and dreaded the entire idea of giving a speech but felt clearly that they grew from the effort. Learning how to organize and write a speech was seen as very useful and so were the concrete suggestions on managing nervousness and methods for assessing one's audience.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (87%) said that they felt more confident in their ability to effectively lead a group. Many of the responses cited above formed the backdrop for their increased self-confidence. Other factors cited as contributing to leadership growth were such things as the presence in the workshop and on tape of female role models in leadership roles, the steps in formulating an action plan and the non-threatening and informal atmosphere of the seminar.

The skills or information that participants thought they could apply immediately fell into 3 main categories:

(1) Planning - Formulating an Action Plan

(2) Speaking in Public

(3) Managing a Work Group

Some of the points mentioned under managing a group were giving and receiving feedback and being more assertive and dealing with conflict. Again a large majority (78%) felt that the above allowed them to be more self-confident and to take more risks in their public and personal lives.

In general, students wanted a longer training program. This particular program ran for three hours a day for four days. They felt the program was very much needed and should be a requirement for an undergraduate degree. Enjoyment and interest were very high. All of this was reflected in the high level of participation and attendance rate.

III. Various Delivery Formats

In designing the various delivery formats for this program, the participants' developmental place in the world determined which materials and

exercises would be included for a particular group. Interests, preferences, concerns and problems, the form and style of relationships, various roles, the range and variety of life experiences all produce people with different learning needs and capabilities. Participation and learning is greater if the materials and exercises correspond with developmental concerns and abilities.

The initial format for the delivery of the leadership skills training program was intended to meet the needs and interests of the traditional age undergraduate woman. The program was offered first as a three credit January Term (4½ weeks) course entitled "Who's in Charge Here? Women as Leaders". Thirty-one students explored women and leadership in three modules: Leadership Skills Training, Leadership in Organizations and Childhood Origins of Influence. Each module devoted considerable class time to experiential ativities intended to support reflection and discussion and to expand the repetoire of leadership role behavior. "Leadership in Organizations" focused specifically on leadership and followership in the formal organization. "Childhood Origins of Leadership" examined the origins of women's influence in childhood and adolescence at home, school and on the streets. The in-class work was supplemented with and supported by a variety of outside readings, e.g., The Managerial Woman by Hennig & Jardim, The Androgeneous Manager by Alice Sargent, Toward a New Psychology of Women by Jean Baker Miller as well as additional readings.

The Leadership Skills Training included the information incorporated in the body of this paper. In addition, a selection of scenarios was used to highlight decision points in a young woman's life and to examine a range

of alternatives and their probable consequences for her in terms of career, intimate relationships and child-bearing and raising. Three videotapes from the NABW's Looking At Leadership series provided women leaders as role models discussing their approaches to the subject of leadership.

One of the credit bearing assignments required the students to examine a sampling of publications on women and leadership in their major or anticipated career field. They planned, implemented and completed this task in small groups in which they selected a chairwoman, determined the tasks necessary to the accomplishment of their goals, divided the labor and presented an oral report on their findings. In addition, they had to present a brief process observation on the dynamics of their task-oriented group. The work of the group was graded as a single unit so that all members of a team received the same grade. An additional credit assignment was an oral presentation by each student on her problem-solving/change strategy based on the goal she had articulated for herself in phase Ic of the training program.

The training program for returning women is similar to the traditional age undergraduate program but with a few exceptions. The program is strictly a non-credit bearing experience. The average age of returning women for our workshop program is 35 years. Developmentally, she is at a very different point in the life span compared with her 18-22 year old sister. Her concerns, interests, needs and experiences are reflective of her position in the life span. Psycho-social development theories inform us that people have different phases of their lives. Common concerns in this age group revolve around entering or re-entering the job market, developing a sense of self

that is different from or in addition to the present role of wife and/or mother, home and child management in a marriage or increasingly as a single parent head-of-household as well as career changes or choices. These issues must be addressed and integrated into a workshop on leadership training for this group of women. Modules entitled "Considering a Change: Career and Educational Choices" and "Self-Esteem Building for Women" which aid women in examining these issues become part of the total offering.

All in all we are very encouraged by the response to the program. Requests on campus are coming in from various student government organizations and clubs for segments of the program as well as for the complete presentation. In the Fall I presented two segments of the program on Group Dynamics, and Planning and Problem Solving Strategies to 150 Alumnae agents and officers of the college during an on-campus training weekend for this group. The program was extremely well received and we feel good that we are making a step in the direction of removing existing barriers to the professional and personal achievement of women.

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